



Networks of Mediterranean Youth - NET-MED Youth

Geographical scope/benefitting country(ies):	Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia
Duration (in months):	36 months
Partner(s) institutions:	
Total estimated budget inclusive of Programme Support costs (13%)	1,203,720 USD
Name and unit of project officer	Moufida Goucha, UNESCO Youth Programme, Social and Human Sciences Sector Sylvie Coudray, Communication and Information Sector Borhene Chakroun, Education Sector

Rationale and background

UNESCO has secured EUR 8 M (11,034,482 USD) funding from the European Union, to implement a programme contributing to the creation of an enabling environment for young women and men¹ to develop their competencies, exercise their rights and meaningfully engage as active citizens, particularly in decision-making relating to political, social, economic, educational and cultural policy and planning processes. UNESCO is now seeking 1,203,720 USD to reinforce the impact of the programme and implement complementary activities.

The Middle East and North Africa present the highest unemployment rates worldwide. In the Middle East, 27.2 % of young people in the labour force were without work in 2013 (as compared to 26.6% in 2012) and this figure amounted to more than 29% in North Africa.² In addition, more than 20 million young people work in informal, poor quality jobs at subsistence

¹ Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community. The United Nations defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. For its activities at international level, UNESCO uses the United Nations' universal definition. For activities at national and regional level, UNESCO is flexible to using the definition applied by the specific country/region.

⁴ Inter alia *Manuel d'apprentissage de la démocratie pour les jeunes en Tunisie*, UNESCO, 2011.

wages and without any prospects for improvement³. This crucial issue hampers socio-economic development, and should be tackled by specific policies and mechanisms targeting youth needs.

Youth represent a major part of society in Southern Mediterranean countries and are an important asset for the development and consolidation of democracy, as shown by the historic upheavals witnessed for example in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya in 2011, led and sustained – in their majority – by young women and men driven by a need for change. Recognizing the relevance of their role, the NET MED Youth Programme will be implemented in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia; and will strengthen civil society by enabling an improved representation of youth entities throughout the development and implementation of policies and programmes affecting young women and men.

Why UNESCO?

UNESCO will build on its years of expertise in supporting the development, revision or assessment of public policies affecting youth in different regions, and engaging them through a participatory approach and methodology. In support of this process, UNESCO has produced, tested and mainstreamed substantial pedagogical tools that aim at building youth's knowledge, awareness and capacities to engage in democratic processes and contribute to a human rights culture.⁴

UNESCO is the UN specialized agency tasked with fostering freedom of expression, and has a track record of at least two decades of supporting this fundamental right and the development of free, independent and pluralistic media in conflict, post-conflict and transition countries. UNESCO's work on freedom of expression and media development places particular emphasis on women and youth, as key actors in social transformation, dialogue and peace-building processes. The Organization has proven expertise in empowering under-represented groups through greater access to media, and in enhancing Media and Information Literacy (MIL) among youth, teachers, parents and policy decision-makers, based on the premise that critically understanding the functions of media and other information providers is at the core of being able to enjoy one's right to freedom of expression and access to information.

UNESCO also has substantial experience in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and more broadly skills development for the world of work. UNESCO, through its TVET strategy (2010-2015), is active in supporting its Member States in transforming TVET policies and addressing youth unemployment. It also acts as a facilitator for knowledge-sharing among the development partners in the TVET structure, by strengthening the evidence base of development initiatives, and by providing a platform for free expression of ideas among stakeholders in TVET. UNESCO can mobilize its institutions and experts in all technical areas that are required to promote TVET and youth employment. These include specialists in the UNESCO-UNEVOC centre in Bonn and its global network of TVET institutions.

UNESCO will support the sustainability of the programme through the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), will strengthen collaboration with partners (youth NGOs and associations, student organizations, youth clubs and centres, youth networks, etc.), and will continue to invest extensively in the Interagency Network in Youth Development and the associated youth networks. UNESCO also places special emphasis on youth with disabilities, and this will also be the case during the implementation of the NET-MED Youth Programme

⁴ Inter alia *Manuel d'apprentissage de la démocratie pour les jeunes en Tunisie*, UNESCO, 2011.

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Overall Goal/Objective

The Overall Objective of NET-MED Youth Programme is to improve the access and effective participation of youth in developing and implementing national strategies and policies affecting young women and men in the 10 target countries. The Specific Objective of the programme is to build the capacities of and enhance networking among youth organizations in the 10 target countries, including by increasing their effective interaction with the media and their use of ICT-enabled platforms, in order to reduce the fragmentation of efforts and harness the collective potential of youth in affecting democratic transition towards active citizenship, political participation, economic contribution and social inclusion.

Expected results

1. Inclusive, transparent, gender and disability sensitive and proactive youth networks/organizations in each of the beneficiary countries of the Eastern and Western Mediterranean sea basins are supported and operating for a systematic and structured mobilization of youth around common themes and challenges.
2. Capacities are built amongst youth organizations and relevant authorities in order to empower young women and men to participate in reviewing and revising national policies and legislation on youth, to advocate for the development of national youth strategies/policies and to lobby for the sound implementation of these strategies/policies where they exist.
3. A fair and objective coverage of youth news, rights, achievements and perspectives in mainstream media is ensured (with attention paid to fostering a gender and disability sensitive approach), along with the positioning of youth vis-à-vis national policies and programmes across various sectors (education, employment, access to rights, freedom of expression and access to information, the environment, the fight against corruption, political inclusiveness, etc.).
4. A watchdog role is played by youth associations and organizations for improving the design, implementation and evaluation mechanisms (access, effectiveness, efficiency and equity) of policies, strategies and programmes that are supposedly addressing youth skills development needs and labour market transitions, especially those that are geared towards employment and business creation.

Activities relating to the achievement of expected results



Component 1: Mainstreaming Youth issues into Legislation

This component will allow the mainstreaming of youth issues and concerns across national decision-making and policy implementation. Mainstreaming youth issues entails the development and implementation of inclusive and cross-sectoral national strategies/policies on youth that would provide the strategic framework guiding youth-related interventions in all policy sectors (from education to employment, from culture to social welfare or



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development, from communication to health, from sport to leisure). Such processes also need to meaningfully engage youth at all stages to ensure that youth voices and concerns are considered and integrated in policy responses. Mainstreaming youth issues also requires significant capacity building within the framework of a well-defined action plan developed by participating youth organizations in each country, with clear milestones and a clear definition of the desired outcomes. Similarly, continuous lobbying and advocacy is needed across various spheres of influence in order to ensure that youth concerns and priorities are seriously taken into consideration.

Activities

- Analysis of the situation of youth and youth issues, including in terms of existing relevant policy provisions in each of the 10 countries
- Formulation of, and advocacy on, policy provisions and related action plans, with the participation of youth in 5 countries (based on the analysis previously foreseen)



COMPONENT 2: YOUTH, MEDIA AND ICTs

This component will enable, through a web/mobile friendly online community, exchanges and sharing of best practices between youth organizations at the national and regional level, their systematic and structured mobilization around common challenges, their engagement and watchdog role in regards to the development and implementation of public policies and national strategies on youth. It will also facilitate innovative partnerships and access to ICT tools and applications in support of the promotion of a fair and objective mainstream media coverage of youth news, rights, achievements and perspectives; youth's self-expression vis-à-vis national policies and programmes; increased interaction between media and youth; and strengthened media and information literacy and awareness of freedom of expression standards among young men and women (with a special focus on disadvantaged youth).



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Activities

- Development, launch, and extensive promotion of a new⁵ – comprehensive, full-featured, tri-lingual (English, French, Arabic) – online Platform based on open technologies. Accessible to persons with disabilities. Tested for unimpeded access in all 10 countries on PCs and mobile phones.
- Innovative partnerships, ICT tools and applications serve to enhance monitoring of media coverage of youth news/surveying of youth perceptions about media, increased interaction between media and youth and capacity building on media and information literacy, media production and awareness of the right of freedom of expression and related standards among young women and men (with special attention paid to disadvantaged groups)

⁵ The platform's name will be agreed upon with the young representatives of the working groups/participating organizations during the programme's inception period.



COMPONENT 3: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

This component focuses on the empowerment of national networks of youth organizations focused on skills development, employment, business creation and issues and challenges related to labour market transitions. The activities foreseen aim to enhance the role played by youth organizations in the design, governance and management of related policies and programmes. In this respect, in each beneficiary country, constituted Working Group on Youth and Employment and National Expert Teams will meet in national seminars and work together in order to design a conceptual framework for diagnosis on transition issues, with the support of an international expert in models and skills forecasts at a regional level. The outputs will further be posted on the regional online platform and used by selected youth organizations among the Working Group on Youth and Employment, for capacity development of needs in organization, advocacy, and interaction with stakeholders. Peer reviewing, work shadowing techniques and European neighborhood twinning partnerships will be implemented. Communication campaigns will also be launched and advocacy actions will be led in order to promote a pro-youth labour environment and foster an increased involvement of youth organizations representatives in employment and skills development governing entities.

Activities

- Review of youth skills development, labour market transitions and employment policies, programmes and persisting challenges, provision of forecasts on workforce and employment requirements and experience sharing national/regional seminars, by joint work of National Technical Teams and Working Groups on Youth and Employment
- Assessment and development of youth organizations capacities in advocacy and interaction with stakeholders
- National/regional communication campaigns and advocacy actions

Beneficiaries and stakeholders

The main beneficiaries are independent youth organizations from the 10 target countries, with particular emphasis being placed on reaching out and including new, less resourceful, rural and marginalized youth organizations and groups, together with others currently active at a national level. All relevant stakeholder groups involved in, and affected by public policies on youth will be included. The engagement of higher levels of government, public institutions and civil society, such as youth organizations and youth-related stakeholders (community workers, teachers, academics and researchers, librarians, youth centers, cultural centers, community-based organizations working with youth, universities, student unions, private sector, global and regional development partners) will be essential. Mainstream media will also be involved, as well as experts specializing in ICT-enabled platforms, professional journalists' associations, CSOs, academic institutions and networks working on freedom of expression and media development, including those connecting young bloggers and citizen journalists (at the national, regional and international levels).

The participatory process adopted from the outset is crucial to ensuring ownership by key stakeholders and beneficiary groups, which will be further strengthened by the programme's overall target to embed youth issues and inclusive youth participation within and across national policies and plans.



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Gender equality, one of two global priorities for UNESCO until 2021 (<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/themes/gender-equality/>) will be duly addressed. Firstly, by ensuring that gender equality considerations are mainstreamed systematically into it, from the conceptualization to the implementation and evaluation processes. Secondly, by promoting gender specific programming, focusing particularly on the specific needs, expectations and aspirations of young women within all components, especially women with disabilities and those living in rural areas.

Implementation strategy

The programme is designed on the basis of a needs assessment and identification of priorities, which took stock of inputs by various groups of vulnerable and marginalized youth. During the project's inception period, action plans will be developed by the working groups/participating organizations for each of the target countries and will correspond to the priorities identified according to the respective national context. The national action plans will thus be developed, implemented, monitored and evaluated through a participatory process, engaging all concerned stakeholders – particularly youth organizations – in the field, and on the basis of a contextual analysis identifying national and local needs. All interventions are strategically designed to be complementary and mutually informed, as well as to combine upstream (policy environment) and downstream interventions (society/grassroots work).

Sustainability and exit strategy

The value of the interventions under the NET MED Youth Programme is that they are designed and implemented in a way that develops or strengthens endogenous resources; and creates a self-sustained dynamic and environment that will be further maintained by the principal regional, national and local actors and stakeholders involved in the programme's implementation from the very beginning. The proposed interventions will be planned and implemented in close consultation with other UN agencies at country level. The tools and resources to be produced under the programme, will be designed with a view to encourage their use by key stakeholders even after its finalization. The planned exchanges of good practices, tools and approaches could also encourage the replication or scaling up of activities, and open avenues for new complementary partnerships. A key tool for the successful implementation of the programme will be the online portal and community of practice. UNESCO will facilitate the building of capacities among key youth organizations, so that they can eventually incorporate the online platform and applications into their respective websites.